Catamounts, Paladins, Eagles All Advance

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North Division No. 3 Western Carolina (15-17) captured game two of the Southern Conference Men's Basketball Championship 68-56 over South No. 6 The Citadel Friday afternoon in the U.S. Cellular Center. Western took the lead at 18:49 of the first half

and never looked back. Harouna Mutombo tied for game-high honors with 21 points for Western Carolina. Trey Sumler added 18 points and six assists, while Keaton Cole chipped in 14 points and six assists of his own.

Mike Groselle matched Mutumbo's 21-point effort for the Bulldogs. He scored 16 of his 21 in the second half leading his squad to 65.2 percent shooting (15-23) from the field after intermission, 52.4 percent (22-42) for the game. Trailing by seven at the break, The Citadel got within five twice in the second half. The first came on a Groselle layup at 15:28, 31-26, and then again at 13:20, 37-32, on Groselle's old-fashioned three-point play.

WCU nailed three-pointers on three consecutive possessions to extend the lead to 12, 46-34. Brandon Boggs hit the first followed by Cole and Sumler. Groselle got the Bulldogs within seven, 52-45, on another and-one at 6:34.

Cole and Sumler combined again from beyond the arc to stretch the lead quickly back to 12, 58-46, at 5:15. The Catamounts lead swelled to 14, 66-52, with 1:29 to go on a Sumler free throw. The Bulldogs tried to make it interesting.

Lawrence Miller nailed a jumper at 1:18 to get it back to 12, 66-54. That was followed immediately by a Cosmo Morabbi steal and layup in the full court press to make it 66-56, but that was as close as it would get.

The Citadel's hot second half was matched by WCU. The Catamounts hit 65.2 percent (15-23) as well including five of 11 (45.5%) from three-point range. They made 12 of 27 (44.4%) for the game compared to four of 11 (36.4%) for the Bulldogs.

Groselle scored the first basket of the game for The Citadel before a 9-0 run for the Catamounts, all on three-pointers. Mutumbo, Cole and Sumler each drained deep shots in the first four-and-a-half minutes of the game.

Ashton Moore hit the Bulldogs' lone three of the first half at 10:48, to make it a two-point game, 12-10. Mutumbo's trey at 3:13 capped a 7-2 run where WCU held The Citadel to just one field goal over nearly a nine-minute stretch.

Western Carolina advances to the quarterfinals of the Southern Conference Championship to face South Division No. 2 Wofford Saturday at 2:30 p.m. The game can be viewed on ESPN3.com and live stats are on the SoConSports.com men's basketball page.

Furman 75, Samford 66

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A balanced Furman scoring attack led the Paladins past Samford, 75-66, in the first round of the Southern Conference men's basketball tournament Friday evening. Charlie Reddick and Bobby Austin each scored 15 for the Paladins (15-15), while Brandon Sebirumbi added 12 points and seven rebounds in the win.

Samford's Drew Windler scored a game-high 21 points for the Bulldogs, who were held to just 2-of-20 shooting from beyond the arc. Tyler Hood scored 13 points and Raijon Kelly added 10 for Samford (11-19).

Despite cold shooting from beyond the arc, Samford made 48 percent of its field goals and finished with just six turnovers. The Bulldogs got 44 of their 66 points in the paint. Furman, meanwhile, held a 42-24 edge on the glass and held a 17-9 advantage in second-chance points.

Furman went into the locker room with a 39-33 lead at halftime. The Paladins shot 42 percent in the first half and knocked down six shots from beyond the arc. Charlie Reddick led Furman with 11 points in the first half, while Samford's Drew Windler poured in 12. Furman enjoyed a 24-11 edge in rebounds in the first half.

The Paladins advance to take on the South Division's top seeded Davidson Wildcats Saturday at 6:00 p.m.

Georgia Southern 76, Chattanooga 70

The Georgia Southern Eagles advance to the quarterfinals of the Southern Conference tournament with a 76-70 win over Chattanooga Friday night at the U.S. Cellular Center in Asheville, N.C. Sophomore Eric Ferguson led GSU with 26 points and eight rebounds, while Jelani Hewitt added 15 points and nine rebounds.

Jahmal Burroughs paced Chattanooga (11-21) with 15 points and 13 rebounds. The Mocs got 13 points off the bench from Dontay Hampton.

Chattanooga carried an eight-point lead into the break on the strength of their defense as UTC held Georgia Southern to just 37 percent shooting in the first half. Ronrico White led the Mocs with 12 points off the bench in the first half. Ferguson scored 13 in the opening stanza for the Eagles.

Trailing 28-19, Georgia Southern used a 9-3 run to pull to within three (31-28) with 4:16 left in the first half. UTC responded with a 10-1 run of its own to surge ahead 41-29 late in the opening half.

With the win, Georgia Southern (15-14) advances to take on Elon Saturday night in the

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quarterfinals. Tip-off is set for 8:30 p.m.

Photo Courtesy: Southern Conference Athletics